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ABSTRACT

A four-year program for academic leadership development of department chairpersons is presented as a strategy for institutional renewal. The program has been used successfully with 100 chairpersons, ranging from the various technologies and sciences to the humanities and social sciences. The program is based on three assumptions. First, that the department chairperson is a primary filter affecting academic change and climate within an institution of higher learning. Second, that an academic leadership program is not likely to impact a university if it is not conceived within the context of the characteristics of the professionals who are to participate and the needs of the particular institution that they serve. Third, that academic leadership development, rather than management training, is an organizing concept more congruent with the milieu of the university. The planning and implementation of the program at Rochester Institute of Technology is described. The program consists of twelve yearly seminars held twice a week. Seminar participants are evaluated for: organization style, subject discipline, curriculum planning, management, leadership, internal communication. Interviews, semantic differential tests, organizational perception scales, open-ended questionnaires, and participant-observation were used to evaluate the success of the leadership seminar. Results indicate that after participation in the program department chairpersons made significant new commitments of time and resources to the professional development of their faculty. (Author/SF)

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ACADEMIC LEADERSHIP DEVELOPMENT FOR DEPARTMENT CHAIRPERSONS

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INTRODUCTION

This paper will review a successful four year program for the academic leadership development of department chairpersons. This program has involved one hundred chairpersons, ranging from the various technologies and sciences (i.e., electrical engineering, chemistry, photography, printing, packaging, computer science) to the humanities and social sciences (i.e., fine arts, social work, criminal justice, accounting). This particular strategy for institutional renewal was proposed and budgeted based upon three assumptions. First, that the department chairperson is a primary filter affecting academic change and climate within an institution of higher learning. A fair amount of research indicates that climate or quality of life existing within a university may be the single, most powerful element affecting teaching excellence and student performance. Therefore, a leadership development program for chairpersons appears to be a useful strategy towards improving university teaching and learning. Second, that an academic leadership program is also not likely to impact a university if it is not conceived within the context of the characteristics of the professionals who are to participate and the needs of the particular institution which they serve. National models are stimulating, but often cannot be generalized. Third, that academic leadership development, rather than management training, is an organizing concept more congruent with the milieu of the university. Academic leadership development concepts are somewhat distinct from management principles and assumptions largely developed from business models.

THE PLANNING PROCESS

Sensitive to these assumptions, in late 1974, the provost of RIT requested that an ad hoc committee draw up a set of discussion questions regarding academic leadership development at RIT for a seminar of the vice presidents and deans. Recommendations made during that seminar prompted the provost to charge an Academic Leadership Planning Group with the development of a proposal for a seminar series and a budget to support it. Over a six-month period, members of the Planning Group interviewed all academic deans and approximately half of the department chairpersons at RIT concerning their needs as academic leaders and their conception of the characteristics of a seminar series which would be of value to

them. These interviews suggested that a leadership program for department heads was needed to compliment other institutional efforts aimed toward the professional development of faculty members. From their interview data, and their reading of the professional development literature the Planning Group did conclude that the department chairperson at RIT plays a critical role as mentor, as connector between departmental faculty and their respective colleges.

Drawing further upon the interviews with deans and department chairpersons, the members of the Planning Group identified three programming objectives. The most frequently cited request dealt with a socialization objective: a clearly felt need for activity which would reduce the sense of isolation and encourage interaction among academic leaders at the departmental level. Another request called for a more thorough understanding of RIT as an institution and organization. Two objectives for the series were developed based on these needs. One programming dimension of the series would attempt to assist in the definition of the broad roles and functions of department chairpersons (academic leadership). Another effort would be devised to provide department chairpersons with a full overview of significant policies, priorities, trends and procedures related to the day-to-day operations of the institution. In the course of four years of operation, two other objectives were realized. First, academic chairpersons were provided direct access to central administrators. Second, chairpersons were assisted in their readiness for a more competency based second phase of a leadership development program.

The format of the Academic Leadership Series was developed from these three objectives. The yearly series consists of twelve seminars, each two hours in length, followed by cocktails and dinner. A yearly budget of \$5,000 was established by the provost to support this series.

For the first year, topics for each of the seminars were developed by the Planning Group based on input from department chairpersons, while presentors were primarily selected by members of the Planning Group. Seminars were held every two weeks, commencing in mid-September and ending in late March. The final seminar in the series is devoted to a report by the series evaluation team and a discussion of their findings by participants.

THE CONTEXT OF RIT

Rochester Institute of Technology occupies 400 acres of a 1300 acre site

in suburban Rochester. RIT maintains a metropolitan center in downtown Rochester and enrolls 9,000 full-time students. The Institute pioneered cooperative education in New York State and includes ten Colleges (Science, Engineering, Institute College, Business, Graphic Arts and Photography, Fine and Applied Arts, General Studies, Continuing Education, Eisenhower, National Technical Institute for the Deaf). RIT employs around 150 academic leaders below the level of dean (department chairpersons, assistant deans and school directors).

EVALUATION

Before evaluation plans were made, the Planning Group established certain broad principles for implementing an evaluation program. First, any form of evaluation should be as unobtrusive as possible. Evaluators would be known, but remain in the background of the on-going process of the activities in the project. Two individuals from the campus who possessed reputations as trustworthy, helpful and competent, were selected as evaluators. It was decided that three major areas would comprise the evaluation model. There would be evaluation of the cognitive elements learned, as well as the affective changes in the participants and an additional on-going process evaluation.

In terms of cognitive content, the evaluation model concerned itself with: (1) each participant's personal organizational style; (2) each participant's awareness of the subject discipline in their own department; (3) the changes that occurred in the participants' involvement in curriculum planning; (4) the participants' understanding of leadership process and product; (5) the participants' growth and change as planners; (6) the participants' changes and effectiveness in using internal communication, with peers as well as with deans and central administrators.

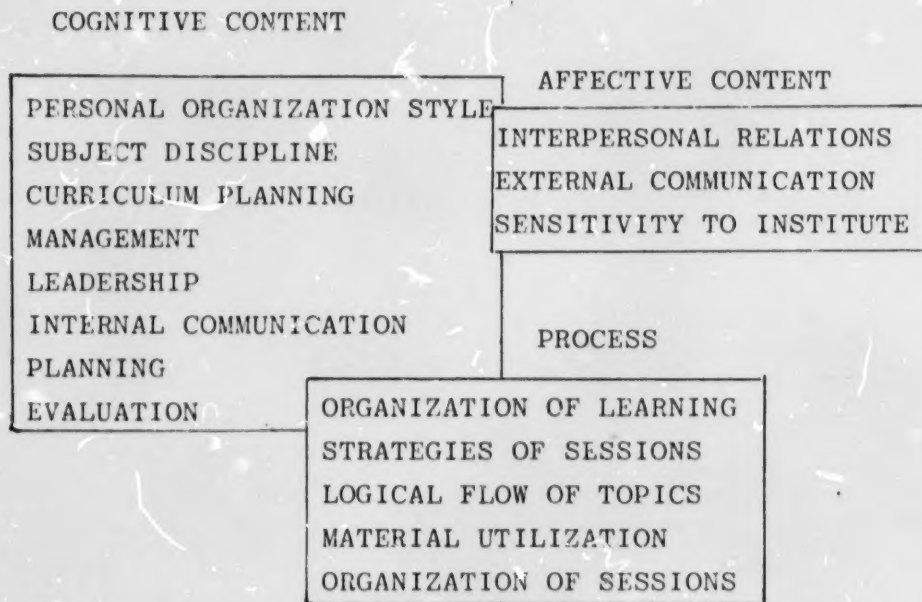
The evaluation model also looked at possible affective changes in the participants. Surveys were used which posed questions such as: would the interpersonal relationships of the academic leaders, with other academic leaders, change as a result of the series? Another question in the affective domain was participants' concern with external communications and the importance placed on those communications with other members of the institution. And finally, the affective evaluation attempted to gauge the sensitivity of the participants to institutional policy, planning and operation.

Since the Planning Committee was quite concerned about the week-to-week operation of the leadership series, certain procedures for evaluating the "process of learning" were also included in the evaluation model. There were five major areas of process that needed to be addressed: (1) How were the learnings organized? (2) Was there a logical flow of topics within the series? (3) Were the strategies of the individual sessions effective? (4) Were instructional materials utilized effectively, if at all? (5) Was the general organization of the sessions most effective to enhance learning and feelings?

In Table 1, this evaluation model is depicted showing how each element of the model is contingent upon the other elements.

MODEL OF EVALUATION

TABLE I



INSTRUMENTATION

The evaluation subcommittee considered the particular instrumentation and strategies to be used. A series of measures needed to be developed. Standardized instruments, of course, were not readily available. Standardized instruments would likely pose a threat to the various participants because of the various and unique frames-of-reference among the academic leaders.

Five general instrumentation strategies were devised to evaluate the various operations of the series. (See Table II).

INSTRUMENTS AND FUNCTIONS

TABLE II

<u>INSTRUMENTS</u>	<u>EXAMPLE</u>	<u>INFORMATION BASE</u>
1. Interviews	"Are there experiences related to the workshop series that you would describe as 'key learnings'?"	Content and Process of the sessions; rating of speakers, and organization of series.
2. Semantic Differential	MY ROLE AS AN ADMINISTRATOR interesting.....boring constricted.....spacious	Views on the topics and issues of the workshop.
3. Organizational Perception	"When I feel a change should be made in my organization unit, I..."	Sensitivity to the institution, leadership style; interpersonal relations; management freedom.
a. Feel free to act upon my feelings	b. Don't know how to go about getting a hearing for my ideas	
c. Can speak up, depending on how strongly I feel	c. Sense the organization wouldn't take to suggestions coming from someone like me	
(Answer as to how you feel it is and how it should be)		
4. Open-Ended Questions	"What I like best about governance at RIT is..."	Expectations of the institution curriculum leadership; role in staff development.
5. Observations	The kinds of questions asked during session; who was communicating with whom; conversation at dinner; after the sessions, etc.	How interpersonal relations with other leaders was occurring; impact of sessions.

The first of these was a structured interview with selected open-ended questions. The interviews were to be given prior to the beginning of the first session of the series, at least once throughout the series, and as a post-evaluation tool. This interview procedure was also utilized with alumni of this series one and two years after their participation.

The second instrument used, was a pre-post semantic differential test. This related to the function of academic leadership such as communication with subordinates, risk taking in curriculum planning and budget development. The semantic differential was chosen because of its high reliability in statistical procedures.

The third evaluation measure was an organizational perception scale. Various items about how an individual perceives one's organization were developed, and the participants were asked to list their perceptions of how things are within the institution, as well as how they believe various aspects of the organization should be. This procedure is described in the literature as an incongruity measurement. A pre-post utilization of this instrument suggests various shifts, that is, how individuals perceive an organization before they begin a learning experience and how they perceive it after. There is also a comparison of how they perceive the organization should be after a training session. In essence, there would be four basic measurements that would be derived from such an organizational perception scale.

The fourth strategy used various open-ended questionnaires and incomplete sentence tasks. These were given to the participants throughout the series and towards the end of the series to measure changes proposed in the model of evaluation. Some of these open-ended questions dealt with value statements and were more directed toward the affective dimensions of the model.

The organizational perception scale, the semantic differential, and the open-ended questions were also administered to alumni of the series one and two years after participation.

A final technique utilized, but not necessarily considered under instrumentation was that of participant-observation. The two evaluators would each attend one of the sessions in an alternate manner. The evaluators would observe various kinds of behavior, comments and questions of the participants. Notes from all of the seminars were maintained and utilized in the final

evaluation report. Post-tests of the semantic differential and the incongruity measure were also administered and analyzed for significance of mean difference. Over the past four years, the Planning Group and the evaluators have gradually distilled this somewhat complex evaluation system into an interview, participant observation and single survey approach which appears to deliver quite adequate information on content, process and relationships.

FACTORS CONTRIBUTING TO SUCCESS

The data collected from our evaluation process over the past two years clearly demonstrates that the participants are enthusiastic about the series and, without exception, in support of its continuance for others. A particularly encouraging finding was that, department chairpersons have made significant new commitments of time and resources toward the professional development of their faculty following this exposure to the leadership series. Participants unambiguously expressed their appreciation for the leadership series, in part, as an affirmation of their importance to RIT. One participant summed up this reaction when he said, "the arrangements give us a sense of place at RIT". During evaluation interviews, chairpersons demonstrated a lot of special recall long after individual sessions had been concluded. Overall, participants rated the sessions as most successful in terms of our "reduction of isolation" or socialization objective; worthwhile in terms of our role definition, and somewhat weak in terms of our specific skill development objective. The add-on objectives of direct access to top management and development of readiness for a second phase competency based series were achieved. Participants gave "academy awards" for the best presentation to 10 out of 12 sessions. That is, for each of ten seminars, at least one participant thought that one was the best. Variety seemed to help since not all participants were looking for the same thing. A single focus for the leadership series would have been counterproductive.

There were a number of factors which participants highlighted as contributory to the success of this leadership series:

1. Seminar series names were avoided which carried strange semantic loadings in higher education, like redevelopment, management, and even professional development. The term Academic Leadership seemed to work out very well.
2. The Planning Group drafted special objectives for each session which were expanded upon in lengthy letters sent to the presentors by the Chairperson/Moderator for the series.

3. The format worked and the fact that the budget was ample allowed the Planning Group to do a "classy" job of meeting and socializing.
4. The program is cost-effective in the sense that, per individual participant, less was spent than the cost of many regional conferences, approximately \$150.00 per individual participant.
5. Reading was kept to a minimum and selective distribution of articles, exercises and outlines by presentors was encouraged.
6. Electronic or professional transcribing was not used during the first year of the series.
7. The series, among other things, demonstrated the fact that RIT, like most universities, enjoys an impressive cadre of in-house talent.
8. The fact that the last session in the series was developed as an evaluation session where the two evaluators shared all of their findings, observations and tentative conclusions and the participants reaction to them seemed to conclude the program on a basis particularly well regarded by our academic leaders.

A further validation of the utility of the series to participating department chairpersons was their request to be invited back to one or two sessions each year as alumni. This has proved to be a most successful venture.

SPECIFIC RESULTS

A number of evaluative findings consistent over the four years of the series, allow for some tentative claims of success.

1. Series alums spend more time on faculty development matters.
2. Series alums see the university as a more complex organization.
3. Series alums are more likely to press their deans for better information and mentorship.
4. Series alums request continuing contact with this and another series.

5. Series alums have a broader conception of departmental atmosphere as a key to student and faculty morale and productivity.
6. Series alums maintain that deans need a series too.
7. While experienced and inexperienced department chairpersons had different needs, the discussion of common issues and the process of sharing provided a more than adequate offset to a mixed participant series.
8. Series alums have a readiness for more competency oriented workshops.
9. Series alums are convinced that many different and successful leadership styles can be practiced.
10. Curriculum development and program costing methodologies are poorly understood by many academic leaders.
11. Approaches to faculty evaluation and development are so subtle that effective communication is lost.
12. Many academic leaders are unaware of the the substantial economic commitment made by an institution in the act of hiring a faculty member.
13. Leadership series suffer from the lack of conference techniques on the part of academic leaders, allowing possible capture by a few verbal prima donnas.
14. Phone personalities became real people.

ON-GOING RESEARCH QUESTIONS

The evaluation team and the planning group are confident that leadership development at RIT has been motivated and reinforced by the series. Interviews with participants provide an especially strong indicator that the series is effective as a socialization vehicle and as a role validation and definition process. A research question currently under study by the evaluation team and planning group relates to the time interval after which a similar series will need to be conducted for participants in order to continue to assist them in their roles as developing academic leaders. Some alumni of this series are now requesting a Phase Two Program which would be more oriented to particular skill development for chairpersons such as, time management, decision-making process and personnel evaluation strategies. This leadership development approach has increased both the confidence and competence of department chairpersons and created an atmosphere wherein these academic leaders feel appreciated and more eager to continue both their own and their faculty's leadership growth and development. Some additional questions for consideration clearly emerge from this leadership series approach:

1. Is there a natural second phase for this leadership development series?
2. How long do the effects of such a series last?

3. Would other options, different from our program, which combined seminars on matters of substance, conviviality, collegueship, and institutional affirmation, be equally successful?
4. How important is the base-line of academic leadership morale to the format, content and process of a series?
5. Can a leadership series for department chairpersons be effective if there is no overall institutional renewal effort aimed at different groups and other priority matters?
6. Will institutional reward systems continue to reinforce participation in such programs and implementation of suggested behaviors?
7. Can private consultations with participants of such a series continue the benefits of public conversations and sharing of information and strategies which characterized this series?

Currently the planning group at RIT is recommending a trio program for the next several years: a continuing, but somewhat shortened version of the current program for newly appointed department chairpersons; a new competency-based "workshops in leadership" for alumni of the leadership series; and a special college overview program, in which individual deans review their programs and plans, for all alums and participants in the continuing series. These three efforts would be run at a per capita cost of less than \$100 per academic leader involved.

CANTANKEROUS CONTENTIONS

During the course of planning and implementing this academic leadership development workshop series, several of my contentions about the academic community have been reinforced.

1. Academic leaders have needs for affirmation and mentorship just as faculty and students do.
2. There exists little clarity about the expectations which academic leaders must meet.
3. Released time for academic leaders to pursue leadership development activities is a slippery concept.
4. Departmental leadership often lack direct access to, and inherit multiple interpretations of, central administration plans.
5. Listening is a competency poorly developed by many academic leaders.
6. Academic institutions rarely provide ample opportunities for informal interaction in enriched surroundings for academic leaders.
7. Academic institutions rarely provide special time for thought and conversation on issues of substance by academic leaders.

8. Departmental academic leadership is a primary filter affecting institutional climate and operations.
9. The primary objective of an academic leadership series should be the development of readiness for a later competency-based series.
10. Basic humanism in the academic work is the only sufficient offset to low compensation for academic leaders.

These all await, I might add, solid empirical verification.